

eClinicalWorks CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



Brown Clinic

Promoting a Healthy Community in South Dakota

The Challenge

After a successful Go-Live with eClinicalWorks, a busy multi-specialty practice in South Dakota wanted to further improve the quality of their practice. By strengthening their Population Health efforts, they hoped to make care more personal and responsive.

The Solution

Recognized as a Patient-Centered Medical Home, Brown Clinic has also used HEDIS® measures to identify gaps in care, and the eClinicalWorks Chronic Care Management module to provide individualized, prevention care that targets more than 500 high-risk patients.

The Results

Patients appreciate Brown Clinic's focus on prompt, customized care, while providers report lower risks for burnout. With eClinicalWorks as their healthcare IT partner, Brown Clinic continues to fulfill its mission of delivering compassionate care "from people you can trust."

**HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).*

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Uniting Tradition and Technology on the Prairie

Founded in 1879, Watertown, South Dakota, is set amid the fertile prairie of the eastern half of the state, where sunflowers and oats share seemingly endless acres with cattle and corn. Built by railroads and agriculture, Watertown today



Krystal Crance,
Director of Patient Engagement

is a community of 22,000, most of whom claim German, Norwegian, or native Sioux ancestry.

History and community are strong here, and for more than half its history, Watertown has been home to a medical clinic that mirrors its residents

— friendly, down-to-earth, and practical. Since 1935, [Brown Clinic](#) has offered patients from Codington County and surrounding areas “quality and compassionate care from people you can trust.”

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eClinicalWorks Electronic Health Record (EHR), employing every option of value to their patients.

Focusing on Population Health

Recently, the clinic has refined its use of Population Health tools to improve the delivery of care.

“It does kind of bring us back to the roots of when Brown Clinic opened,” said Krystal Crance, Director of Patient Engagement, “really getting to that personal level of what is going on with our patients. Getting to know how many grandchildren they have, what are their living conditions, what makes them happy.”

Putting patients at the center of the practice, Crance adds, has helped remind the clinic’s staff of why they got into healthcare in the first place. And eClinicalWorks has been a valuable partner as the clinic grows.

With their previous EHR, said Dr. Stacie A. Lenssen, providers had to go through multiple records and charts in a process that was little better than using paper.

“You can’t read every one,” Dr. Lenssen said, “and so you end up reading a portion and hoping that it kind of is similar to everybody else’s. Once we moved to eClinicalWorks, everything is in the same place, easy for people to find, and you can pull those numbers easily. eClinicalWorks really had all of the little modules we needed. We love using the CDSS alerts, where you can individualize them for patients or a population, and keep track of what they are up to date on.”

Asking the Right Questions of Patients

One of the most valuable functions in Population Health is identifying patients who are overdue for exams or may have factors that place them at risk for disease.

For eight decades, Brown Clinic has earned the trust of their community. And providers and staff at Brown Clinic are known as superusers of the eClinicalWorks Electronic Health Record (EHR), employing every option of value to their patients.

“We have built into our rooming process questions that are not just about their chronic conditions, but about their life outside of these four walls,” said Crance. “It’s usually those other factors in their life that play into why they might not be taking their medications, why they’re not able to show up to their appointments.”

Truly listening to patients and understanding the full context of their lives, she adds, is critical for building trust and knowing what their goals are.

“We might have one goal for them, but that might not be where they are in their life at that point,” she said.

How HEDIS and CCM Are Helping

Population Health tools, including use of the Health Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) measures for identifying gaps in care, give providers an edge with every patient encounter, Dr. Lenssen said.

“It’s just easier to enter a patient encounter knowing that the background information is up to date,” she said.

The Brown Clinic team, Dr. Lenssen adds, works together to analyze performances. If a particular physician is achieving excellent results, the staff try to identify what is working well and share that knowledge. Conversely, if a provider is struggling, other staff share ideas that can help that provider.

The Chronic Care Management (CCM) program is a great example of how Population Health efforts are paying off.

“You can pull up their care team, see who their cardiologist is, for example,” Dr. Lenssen said. “It makes a huge difference in keeping track of patients outside of office hours.”

Reaching Out With a Down-Home Touch

Nurse Marilyn Hogan, who has been with Brown Clinic for two years, works with 500+ patients in the CCM program.

“I have created a spreadsheet where I have patients listed in alphabetical order and how often they want to be called,” Hogan said. “It includes when their most recent wellness visit was, when a call is due. My job and my goal is to reach out to as many patients as I can in a month. I let them know that I’m a South Dakota girl, and I can relate to what it’s like to live in this area.”

That down-home approach might not resonate in big, coastal cities where mobility and anonymity predominate, but 65% of South Dakotans are from here, and many have no intention or desire to leave.

“I’ve been a resident of Watertown and a patient at Brown Clinic since 1964,” said Lloyd Christians, one of Hogan’s many CCM patients. “We’ve had very good results for our whole family. We had three children, and all were patients here. The doctors are so friendly and very knowledgeable with what they do.”

Serving Families for Generations

Christians remembers his previous providers at Brown Clinic with fondness. For years, he received care from Dr. Gerald E. Tracy, a Watertown native and World War II U.S. Army veteran who headed the State Medical Association in 1975 and practiced at Brown Clinic for 44 years.

In the early 1980s, Christians had problems with muscle spasms and cramps. Dr. Clark W. Likness directed him to a specialist in Sioux Falls, where Christians had successful surgery that preserved his ability to walk for many years.

Today, Christians continues to enjoy the personal touch that Brown Clinic offers. If he wakes on a given day and feels something isn't quite right, he'll discuss it with his wife and then may give Hogan a call. She can then check with Christians' primary care provider, Dr. Aaron Shives, and set up an appointment if necessary.

"The communication has improved by 100%," he said. "Rather than calling an appointment desk and waiting a week or 10 days for something to get done, I just call Marilyn."

Technologies for a Stronger Future

That level of personalized service requires both caring, dedicated physicians and support staff and effective healthcare IT tools.

"By having a tool that captures all of that without looking through multiple Progress Notes, and in multiple locations, it speeds up our time and our efficiency here," Crance said. "Then we can readily provide that information right away to our patients when we are having those wellness visits, or even when it's not a wellness visit, bringing up that conversation — it looks like you haven't been in for a while, I think it would be good for you to come back in for a wellness visit so that we can be proactive with your health."

The benefits of effective technology also extend to the professional and personal lives of staff. Dr. Lenssen said there has been a reduction in provider burnout.

eClinicalWorks provides us with tools that are geared toward a clinic setting. They're thinking about the doctor, and what information they need right when they're taking care of that patient. Having a tool that really thinks about all the things that go into the day of a nurse or a provider, it just helps us tremendously.

Krystal Crance, Director of Patient Engagement



Using Population Health tools from eClinicalWorks, Brown Clinic has strengthened its outreach to patients with multiple chronic conditions, improving outcomes and remaining true to their history as a healthcare organization dedicated to their community.

"Since we have moved onto eClinicalWorks, people aren't searching for things as much as they used to," she said.

IT That Puts Patients and Physicians First

When computers first came to the clinic, she added, everyone worried that providers and staff would spend more time looking at the screen than at the patients, and lose the hands-on, personal approach that has been a hallmark of the clinic since its founding in 1935.

"But eClinicalWorks has actually been a great tool to bring the patient into the process and the communication. And I think that the patients have noticed that, too," she said. The transition was so smooth, she said, that after just a month, most providers were able to see more patients than they had before.

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